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Whale meat, dark red and tasting something like beef, will be available, chiefly in West Coast markets, this year and will help round out the wartime diet, according to the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries.

Whaling was for many years an important industry in this country and for a period Americans supplied most of the world's needs for whalebone and oil. For nearly a century American whaling activities have been on the decline until by last year they had practically ceased in waters near our shores. This year, however, a shore station has been established in California and three boats will supply it with whales.

Whale meat is eaten in many countries. During the last war it was eaten in the United States in fairly large quantities.

The whale, the largest of all animals, is a mammal and as such has warm red blood and produces living young. It still shows traces of its connection with land animals: it has hair, although only of a rudimentary character, and traces of limbs. What once were front legs have now evolved into fin-like paddles and the hind legs, although not present after birth, are clearly evident in the foetal stage.

Whale flesh is wholesome when properly handled and does not have the fishy taste which makes seal meat unpalatable. Housewives will probably be glad to try it since no ration coupons will be necessary.

Whales were first utilized by Mediterranean peoples who occasionally found them washed ashore. Later the Basques became the leading whalers and by 1600 were operating as far west as Labrador. Whaling became one of the major industries of this country with the settlement of New England and by the 1840's the United States owned three-fourths of the world's whaling vessels. In 1868 the harpoon gun was invented and other mechanical devices perfected and Norway became the most important whaling state.

United States whaling interests declined not only due to the reduction in the number of whales, but because of technological developments in other industries. The petroleum industry took away the market in the field of illuminating oil and lubricants and the development of the steel industry took away the market for whalebone which had been largely used in manufacturing such articles as corsets, umbrellas, and whipstocks. Now there are available in this country cheap substitutes for all but two products of the whale: spermaceti wax which is used in the making of cosmetics, and ambergris, used as a fixative for odors in the manufacture of perfume.

Before the war whaling was carefully controlled over much of the world by treaty and protocol to which all of the major maritime nations were signatory with the notable exception of Japan which continued to kill whales without regard to the protective measures the other nations felt necessary. In the United States, the Whaling Treaty Act is administered jointly by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of the Treasury and their regulations are enforced by the U. S. Coast Guard.

Due to the war, most whaling figures are kept confidential.